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***Multimodal Narrative of Chinese Stories:
Taking the International Communication of China Bouquet as an Example***

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Abstract

The bilingual Chinese-English publication *China Bouquet* employs multimodal narrative strategies to systematically spread China stories to the international world. This study aims to interpret its multimodal narrative pathways and international communication mechanisms from the dimensions of discourse generation, production coding, and distribution dissemination. Findings indicate that during discourse generation, *China Bouquet* leverages a cultural story prototype repository to construct a multimodal narrative blueprint for Chinese narratives; During production encoding, the publication transforms this blueprint into visualizable, perceptible products through the synergy of narrative media; in the distribution phase, it constructs an international communication system by leveraging cross-media channels and feedback negotiation. *China Bouquet's* multimodal narrative strategy embodies a synergistic support mechanism driven by narrative, collaborative actors, and media technology, offering valuable experience and paradigms for the international communication of Chinese narratives.

Keywords: China Story, China Bouquet, Multimodal narrative, International communication

Introduction

China Bouquet is a bilingual Chinese-English publication (two volumes) released by Sinolingua in 2024. It aims to disseminate Chinese stories and culture to the English-speaking world and, in conjunction with the micro-documentary series of the same name, forge new pathways for cultural communication and exchange between China and the rest of the world. Against the backdrop of accelerating digital media development, the cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese narratives has become a core issue in mutual learning between Chinese and Western civilizations. While existing research focuses on subtitle translation for micro-documentaries (Gao, 2024; Yao, 2024; Zhou, 2024), few studies explore the multimodal narrative strategies employed in *China Bouquet*.

This study employs Gunther Kress & Theo van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis theory, while drawing on Mona Baker's translation narrative theory and Barthes's notion of image-text relations to construct a multimodal narrative model for Chinese stories: "discourse generation—production coding—distribution dissemination." This study focuses on examining how *China Bouquet* employs multimodal narrative strategies to effectively spread China stories, while elucidating the intrinsic mechanisms of multimodal storytelling in China narratives. It aims to provide case references and theoretical insights for the cross-cultural communication practices of China stories.

I. New Perspectives on Multimodal Narrative

As British social semiotician Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen jointly proposed, the Multimodal Discourse Analysis Framework encompasses four dimensions: discourse, design, production, and distribution. This theory transcends traditional language-centered discourse analysis models, providing theoretical tools for studying how multimodal sign systems collaboratively construct meaning. Specifically: "Discourse" is defined as "socially constructed knowledge about reality (in certain aspects)" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001:4), meaning specific discourse choices represent meaning systems within social contexts; "Design" achieves intended communicative effects through the selection and combination of multimodal resources (ibid., 5), such as the pairing of modalities like text, images, and sound and their contribution to meaning construction; the "production" dimension focuses on the materialized presentation of the symbolic system, encompassing forms such as color in images, printed products, and video presentations (ibid., 6) ; while "distribution" denotes "the pragmatic function of facilitating preservation and dissemination" (ibid., 7), concentrating on the media channels, platform strategies, dissemination mechanisms, and reader reception of multimodal texts. Within translation studies, these four dimensions provide theoretical tools for interpreting

the multimodal narratives and dissemination of translations, offering insight into the meaning-constructing functions and underlying mechanisms of symbolic combinations.

Meanwhile, Baker's narrative theory supplements the narrative construction mechanism of cultural symbols from a translation perspective, viewing translation as a socially constructed narrative through characteristics such as particularity, genre, normativity, and accumulation (Baker, 2011: 120), guiding audience comprehension of information. Specifically, participants such as translators and editors employ specific genres to reproduce or subvert particular plot elements of the original work. During translation, they facilitate meaning adaptation by appropriately deviating from or innovating upon original narrative norms, ultimately achieving cross-cultural reproduction of discursive meaning through narrative accumulation. Based on this, this study integrates both approaches to construct a multimodal narrative framework of "discourse generation - production coding - distribution dissemination." It consolidates the "design" and "production" stages into "encoding realization," systematically elucidating the complete chain and mechanisms of meaning construction in the multimodal narrative practices of *China Bouquet*.

In the process of translation and communication abroad, Chinese stories can be defined as "narratives with China as the subject, covering various domains such as politics, economy, culture, society, and ethnicity" (Wu & Mou, 2022:76). Therefore, they can be regarded as public narratives—stories led by the state, media, and institutions and disseminated throughout society (Baker, 2011:49-50), emphasizing how cultural adaptation and meaning transmission of Chinese stories can be achieved through translation and cultural conversion. Within this multimodal narrative framework, Chinese stories generate national discourses—transforming individual memories into collective cultural identities—through the construction of diverse cultural symbols. These discourses undergo production and encoding via multimodal narrative media (e.g., books, micro-documentaries) that carry these symbols. Finally, the cumulative effects and sustained influence of cross—media distribution enable the international dissemination of Chinese stories. Building upon this framework, this paper examines the multimodal narrative construction strategies employed in *China Bouquet*, further elucidating the mechanisms of multimodal storytelling within Chinese narratives. This analysis aims to provide practical insights for enhancing the international dissemination of Chinese stories.

II. Discourse Generation: The Construction of Cultural Symbols

Chinese narratives are composed of diverse cultural symbols that embody specific storylines. This section will analyze the cultural symbol construction strategies employed by *China Bouquet* during the discourse generation phase within a multimodal narrative framework,

examining how it leverages particularity, accumulation, and normativity narrative strategies to generate China's international narrative discourse.

(I) Cultural Identity in Particularity Narratives

Cultural symbols form the core narrative content of Chinese stories, and the selection and structuring of representative cultural symbols are crucial for reaching target audiences. Bruner (1991:6-7) posits that particularity narratives reference specific individuals and events, deriving symbolic meaning from their embedding within universal story frameworks. The reproduction or rewriting of plots often serve as an effective means to evoke audience resonance while advancing specific social or political objectives (Baker, 2011:126-128). The editorial team of *China Bouquet* employs differentiated symbolic representations to construct a distinctive Chinese cultural identity, presenting the nation's historical memory within its narratives to target audiences.

Concrete cultural symbols carry specific value systems and aesthetic concepts in discourse generation, serving as key elements in the construction of multimodal symbol systems. The book selects nineteen cultural symbols—including bronze ware, tea, siheyuan courtyard houses, huangjiu rice wine, chopsticks, and kung fu—to collaboratively narrate Chinese stories, presenting dimensions of Chinese architecture, artifacts, landscapes, and art. Social actions within narrative texts serve significant representational functions (van Leeuwen, 2008:55). By recreating craft scenes and individual stories, the book shapes a Chinese cultural identity centered on skill inheritance, elevating the symbolic dimension of tangible symbols and fostering audience resonance. For instance, the “Mystery of Liangzhu” chapter meaningfully opens with archaeologists discovering the Jade Cong King artifact—its circular interior and square exterior structure echoing the “heaven is round, earth is square” cosmology, while its divine human and animal-face motifs embody concepts of divine-human communication and nature worship, symbolizing ritual systems and the philosophy of unity between heaven and humanity. Chinese cultural identity is thus concretized through the elevated pathway of “artifact-cosmology,” aligning with international audiences’ focus on ecological concerns. *China Bouquet* integrates culturally distinctive symbols like artifacts and architecture into its narrative network, providing international readers an effective cognitive pathway to understand the historical context and spiritual world of Chinese stories.

(II) The Cultural Framework of Accumulative Narratives

The international dissemination of Chinese narratives relies not only on singular narratives to construct cultural identity but also on accumulative narratives to build an overarching cultural

framework. Baker (2011:153-154) defines “accumulation” as “a situation repeatedly influenced by a series of related narratives and the resulting shaping of a culture, tradition, or history.” Through accumulative narratives spanning temporal, spatial, and group dimensions, *China Bouquet* systematically constructs the cultural framework of Chinese narratives, fostering recognition and resonance among international audiences.

On the temporal dimension, the book traces Chinese cultural symbols from the five-thousand-year history of the Liangzhu site, through the three-thousand-year tradition of tea drinking and the millennia-old craftsmanship of Xuan paper, to the six-hundred-year splendor of the Forbidden City and contemporary courtyard life, presenting an evolutionary genealogy of Chinese narratives. Through a narrative strategy linking past and present, *China Bouquet* weaves together a cultural thread spanning millennia, facilitating discourse across eras. In the spatial dimension, cultural hubs like Beijing, Hangzhou, Tianshui, Yixing, and Dunhuang serve as vessels for Chinese narratives, vividly illustrating the flow of regional cultural symbols across cross-cultural communication. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001:32) note that discursive practices possess productive and transformative qualities; the reconfiguration of diverse symbolic resources and modalities generates new meaning structures that support narrative discourse. For instance, the book’s comprehensive presentation of Yixing purple clay teapots—the pinnacle of Chinese tea ware—showcases the entire production process: from mining and grinding to shaping, carving, and firing. This is complemented by the artistic integration of poetry, calligraphy, and painting on the teapot body, with multimodal symbols working in concert to highlight both technical heritage and aesthetic traditions. Through spatial displacement, the locally inherited purple clay teapot culture undergoes transformation and recoding, becoming a coveted object among global tea enthusiasts. From a collective perspective, the multimodal narrative of Chinese stories begins with individual laborers—bronze artisans, Dunhuang researchers, Xuan paper craftsmen—to sketch a macro-level portrait of the Chinese nation’s collective identity. Multiple narratives accumulate through cross-media formats, weaving a rich and enduring cultural tapestry across continuous time and space. This cumulative storytelling strategy not only reveals the historical depth, regional characteristics, and ethnic portraits of Chinese cultural symbols, but also transforms local narratives into vital components of the international discourse system, thereby enhancing the global visibility of Chinese stories.

(III) Cultural Negotiation in Normative Narratives

After cumulative narratives establish the macro framework for multimodal narratives, normative narratives further achieve meaning adaptation through cultural negotiation. Normative narratives refer to a key characteristic of narratives, where adherence to or deviation

from norms “emphasizes the central role narratives play in upholding cultural legitimacy” (Baker, 2011:149). As the international dissemination of Chinese stories varies with cultural contexts and audience expectations, translators and editors often engage in cultural negotiation—either remaining faithful to the original narrative norms or deviating from them to innovate—thereby facilitating the effective circulation of Chinese narratives.

China Bouquet adopts a dual narrative perspective encompassing both national narratives and everyday life. It breaks away from the traditional single grand narrative and elite discourse in foreign propaganda, avoiding didacticism and value indoctrination. Instead, it focuses on the life details and craft practices of ordinary people. The book begins with stories of ordinary individuals—paper-making artisans, rice wine brewers, medicinal cuisine chefs, makeup artists—using “small entry points” to showcase the exquisite skills, cultural depth, and spiritual traditions within Chinese narratives, thereby enhancing emotional resonance for English readers. Moreover, the book innovatively incorporates Western concepts into cross-cultural expression. It interprets the ideal pursuit of “a world of universal harmony” through the lens of “utopian” thought and juxtaposes the “Eastern smile” of a young monk statue with the “Western smile” of the Mona Lisa. By integrating multimodal resources of text and images, it demonstrates aesthetic concepts that transcend time, religion, and national borders. Such normative narrative strategies effectively bridge cultural divides between East and West, making Chinese narratives more accessible and relatable on the global stage. Moreover, translation itself serves as a pivotal element in narrative construction. For culturally loaded terms like dynasties, historical periods, locations, and idioms, translators and editors frequently employ footnotes and marginal annotations to assist English readers in navigating cultural barriers. Take the Liangzhu site as an example: the translation includes an interlinear note “about 3,300-2,300 BC” after the place name, translating the abstract Chinese designation into a temporal concept familiar to English readers, thereby reducing cultural comprehension gaps. *China Bouquet* not only employs diverse methods to enrich Chinese narratives but also emphasizes bridging Chinese and Western cultures, enhancing international readers’ understanding of China’s aesthetic systems and value concepts.

In summary, *China Bouquet* constructs a multimodal narrative system for Chinese stories by integrating particularity, accumulation, and normative narratives strategies: particularity narratives clarify cultural identity through concrete symbols; accumulation narratives build cultural frameworks by layering meanings across temporal, spatial, and group dimensions; while normative narratives advance cross-cultural negotiation and meaning adaptation by adhering to or innovating original narrative conventions. The synergistic operation of these narrative strategies facilitates the decoding of Chinese narratives from domestic discourse to cross-cultural contexts.

III. Encoding Implementation: Synergy of Narrative Media

After completing the symbolic composition of discourse, *China Bouquet* enters the production encoding phase. This involves transforming the discourse design blueprint into a visualizable, perceptible narrative product through the synergy of modalities and media. This encompasses dimensions such as genre-based design, modal strategies, and narrative collaboration, thereby enhancing the cross-cultural communication effectiveness of Chinese stories.

(I) Narrative Adaptation Through Genre Design

Driven by digital technology, cross-cultural communication media have evolved from singular textual forms into integrated, multimodal interactions involving images, audio, and video. Diverse symbols serve as vehicles for multimodal storytelling while simultaneously empowering representations of Chinese narratives (Lin, 2022:61). Given the differences between text and images in presenting characters, processes, and scenarios within Chinese narratives (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021:45), the design of *China Bouquet* employs a multimodal combination of text, images, and hyperlinked videos to encode Chinese stories, thereby enhancing the communicative impact of the narrative discourse.

Roland Barthes proposed three text-image relationships: anchorage, relay, and illustration. Anchorage refers to the selective interpretation of images by text to control the generation of meaning (1977:40). As a vehicle for Chinese stories, each chapter of *China Bouquet* pairs a core image relevant to its theme with bilingual Chinese-English captions to anchor interpretive direction. This approach enhances the credibility and authority of the narratives while reinforcing readers' structural understanding of the chapters. The narrative text recreates scenes of crafting and restoring cultural symbols like architecture, artifacts, and tools, guiding English readers to grasp the underlying Chinese wisdom and cultural depth.

Supported by digital technology, hyperlinks "accelerate the modal transition from traditional to digital narratives," creating interactive spaces between audiences and texts (Hao & Pang, 2025:84). Each chapter of *China Bouquet* concludes with a QR code hyperlink, enabling audiences to scan and access corresponding micro-documentaries. These micro-documentaries employ on-site visits, narratives from inheritors, live footage of craft processes, and close-up shots. Combined with dynamic visuals, background music, bilingual subtitles, and textual commentary, they create concrete, immersive audiovisual narratives that evoke emotional resonance and interactive engagement among readers, compensating for the static limitations of textual descriptions. The intertextual relationship between micro-documentaries and textual

narratives not only expands the book's storytelling boundaries but also propels English readers from passive recipients to active participants in Chinese stories, significantly enhancing the effectiveness of China's international storytelling.

(II) Conventions and Transcendence of Modal Strategies

Building upon its genre-based narrative framework, *China Bouquet* employs synergistic multimodal strategies to regulate and optimize the international dissemination of Chinese stories. Design is “the conscious action taken on visible, recognized, ‘available’ resources within a specific domain to create a blueprint for what is to be produced” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001:64). In planning its modal resources—including graphics, layout, and color schemes—*China Bouquet* both adheres to traditional conventions and achieves innovative transcendence.

Symbolic elements play a crucial role in guiding audience attention and emotional engagement, particularly through visual narrative techniques like color, layout, and character scenes (Feng, 2015:26). The micro-documentary employs story-driven cinematography to showcase everyday Chinese life, while the print book narrates through integrated text and images. Together, they establish a multimodal narrative model for China's stories. In typographic design, the gold font for main text headings echoes the book title's aesthetic, while chapter titles in the table of contents employ brush calligraphy—its fluid, vigorous strokes conveying the cultural appreciation of calligraphic art.

Within the layout, iconic cultural motifs like the Mogao Caves, Yungang Grottoes, and carved courtyard houses are integrated into the preface, table of contents, and interior pages, establishing visual cues and narrative anticipation for Chinese stories. Simultaneously, thematic patterns are embedded within each chapter's layout as backgrounds or borders (e.g., the taotie beast-face motif from Liangzhu jade cong), creating associative effects with the narrative content. The nineteen chapter motifs form a visual chain, complemented by artifact graphics, decorative patterns, and strategic white space to assist in encoding the Chinese narrative.

For color design, the book employs ten light-toned primary hues including blue, purple, and orange, with each chapter assigned a fixed color for easy navigation. Red is deliberately avoided to minimize political connotations, accommodating cultural differences between East and West. The design blueprints in the book serve as a visual symbol index, while the production process employs high-precision printing technology to materialize the patterns. QR codes bridge print media and digital platforms, enabling cross-modal communication. The

visual narrative of micro-documentaries complements the printed book, advancing the visualization and multidimensional presentation of Chinese stories.

(III) Collaborative Production and Narrative Negotiation

The cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese narratives is not the export of singular texts but a collaborative narrative coding process involving multiple actors. It requires balancing authentic representations of Chinese local culture with acceptability for overseas audiences. The coding process for *China Bouquet* involves diverse roles—producers, planning editors, chief editors, authors, English translators, English editors, cover designers, and printing supervisors—who collectively weave a cross-media collaborative network spanning from narrative planning to materialized presentation.

Multimodal discourse analysis theory posits that “design” constitutes an active, intentional blueprint construction, while production elucidates the material labor and collaborative processes behind textual realization (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001:66). During the book’s coding implementation: Producers and planning editors defined the thematic direction and narrative tone of Chinese stories, emphasizing the book’s focus on “uncovering the values, cultural significance, and spiritual qualities of the Chinese people behind each story” (Xu, 2024: Preface 4); The chief editor and authors led the transformation of micro-documentary visual narratives into textual narratives; English translators and editors handled linguistic transcoding, balancing cross-cultural precision with readability; designers embodied Chinese aesthetics through visual symbols; and print supervisors ensured the materialization of design concepts. Each step interlocked, with diverse actors collaborating in the multimodal narrative construction of Chinese stories, collectively enabling their coding realization.

The key to cross-cultural communication lies in effectively interpreting the core of Chinese culture, enabling Chinese stories to truly take root in the English-speaking world. The stories featured in *China Bouquet* span themes like ritual and music systems, belief systems, and skill inheritance. They showcase China’s profound historical depth through ancient artifacts, architecture, and cultural relics. The book employs vivid, nuanced storytelling techniques, using individual life experiences to highlight craftsmanship and patriotic ideals, avoiding rigid cultural exportation. To achieve this balance, the creation team of *China Bouquet* meticulously curated the content of Chinese stories. They fully utilized multimodal resources to present the content in a way that aligns with the cultural background and aesthetic preferences of international readers, enabling the core of Chinese stories to be understood and accepted in foreign lands.

IV. Distributed Dissemination: The Social Circulation and Cultural Impact of Narratives

Chinese stories undergo encoding through multi-party collaboration before entering the circulation sphere via “distributed dissemination.” Distribution refers to the technical “recoding” of symbolic products and events “for the purposes of recording (e.g., tape recording, digital recording) and/or transmission (e.g., telephone, radio, and television transmission)” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001:87). This involves multimodal symbols such as images, text, and video reaching audiences through media channels. Its dissemination effects involve cross-media form conversion, cross-platform resource integration, and coordinated dissemination strategies, collectively driving the multi-layered, comprehensive dissemination of Chinese narratives.

(I) Cumulative Effects of Cross-Media Distribution

Multimodal symbols—including text, images, and video—are disseminated through diverse media platforms. Each platform reproduces core symbols of Chinese culture, a phenomenon termed “repetitive narration” (Genette, 1990:75). By leveraging complementary media strengths, this approach expands audience reach and reinforces recognition of Chinese narratives. The core challenge of cross-media communication lies in “discovering how different modalities of media interconnect” to collaboratively convey unified meanings (Zhang, 2009: 26). *China Bouquet* employs a cross-media strategy, integrating teaser trailers, previews, micro-documentaries, and print publications to amplify the impact of Chinese narratives.

In 2019, *China Bouquet* micro-documentary was included in the Overseas Film and Television Promotion Project by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee. In 2020, a 29-second teaser debuted at the China Pavilion of the Dubai Expo. In 2022, a fast-paced one-minute teaser launched with Shanghai as its narrative starting point, followed by deployments in core commercial districts of Beijing, Shenzhen, and Wuhan. This fragmented approach to audience engagement rapidly garnered significant attention. Moreover, these teasers and trailers guided audiences to actively explore Chinese narratives on social media and video platforms, creating a dissemination pathway from offline touchpoints to online engagement. This approach provided a communication window for multimodal storytelling about China.

Online platforms also played a pivotal role in disseminating Chinese narratives overseas. Micro-documentaries were released on domestic platforms like China.org.cn, Tencent, Douyin, and iQIYI, as well as international platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and X (Twitter). Simultaneous screenings on MTR Hong Kong and China Airlines in-flight entertainment systems created an interconnected dissemination framework spanning domestic and

international audiences. Domestic platforms reinforced cultural identity within China, while international platforms reached broader global audiences, enhancing the overseas visibility of Chinese narratives.

Following its 2024 publication by Sinolingua, the print edition of *China Bouquet* was immediately cataloged by the National Library of China. This signifies the book's recognition at the national level for its narrative authority and professionalism in disseminating Chinese stories abroad. The book is also available on major domestic and international e-commerce platforms including Dangdang, JD.com, and Amazon. This facilitates the transition of Chinese narratives from institutional promotion to everyday consumer engagement, allowing them to integrate more naturally into the international discourse.

As analyzed above, the teaser and trailer for *China Bouquet* first captured attention through commercial districts and cultural centers. The micro-documentary then employed 4K resolution to showcase natural and cultural landscapes, evoking emotional resonance among audiences. Finally, the print book deepened the accessibility of Chinese narratives through its meticulous writing. This multi-media approach completes a narrative cycle of sensory engagement—emotional immersion—cultural resonance, with synergistic advantages expanding the dissemination pathways for Chinese narratives.

(II) Sustained Impact Through Cross-Media Distribution

During the cross-media linkage strategy, the delayed diffusion effect of Chinese narratives in international communication continuously deepens target audiences' understanding. "Distribution" signifies both technical preservation and dissemination, while also representing the revitalization of symbolic products through new forms of expression and interactive methods (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001:93). The international dissemination of *China Bouquet* achieves semantic proliferation of Chinese narratives through multi-level interactions and secondary creations across national, local, and social media platforms.

Authoritative promotion by national media platforms establishes credibility for *China Bouquet*'s cross-cultural narratives, while local media adaptations deepen and localize the dissemination chain. Taking the Yungang Grottoes as an example, following the broadcast of the micro-documentary *New Views of Yungang*, the Datong Evening News simultaneously interpreted the cultural significance of the grottoes in conjunction with the documentary's content (Cui, 2022), forming a bottom-up response to the national narrative. Such local coverage strengthens the connection between national narratives and regional audience

contexts by focusing on local culture, thereby deepening audiences' memory and recognition of cultural symbols.

Furthermore, secondary creation on social media extends the vitality of Chinese stories in the cultural space through cumulative narratives. WeChat public accounts (such as "yijianhuayun") and video websites share language learning materials from printed books and micro-documentaries, provide subtitle translations and analyses, and offer creative editing, giving Chinese stories new narrative perspectives. Public social media, with its openness and accessibility, caters to different audiences and groups. Audiences can interact with individual narrators through likes, favorites, and shares, constructing a shared and open digital cultural field that allows Chinese stories to be reconstructed and re-disseminated. This recoding of Chinese stories, with individual perspectives participating in the national narrative, enriches the meaning of the original narrative, enabling it to flow and engage in dialogue and mutual learning in the digital cyberspace.

(III) Dissemination Feedback and Optimization Strategies

Compared to the vigorous promotional campaigns and vibrant secondary creation atmosphere on domestic media platforms, the reception of *China Bouquet* on overseas platforms remains limited. The micro-documentaries are accessible on VideoChinaTV accounts across Amazon, YouTube, and other international platforms. While "Courtyard of Harmony" has garnered 9,000 views on YouTube, other episodes have only reached a few hundred views each. Although the first two volumes of *China Bouquet* are available on Amazon, Goodreads, and other foreign platforms, no reader reviews have been posted to date. Reader feedback is scarce, and no discussion or interaction ecosystem has formed around Chinese narratives. In the digital age, the "silent data" on overseas platforms and the faint audience response reflect the practical challenges in disseminating Chinese stories internationally.

Root causes include unclear target audience definition, lack of platform operation strategies, and absence of reader co-creation mechanisms—all hindering overseas dissemination. Specifically, while "China Panorama" focuses on Chinese culture, it has not tailored dissemination strategies for overseas sinologists and academic circles, overseas Chinese communities, or general English-speaking readers. Future dissemination of Chinese stories on academic platforms could strengthen historical references by supplementing archaeological document hyperlinks, while social media platforms could highlight the visual wonders of Chinese culture through macro photography. Simultaneously, online platforms should establish related book recommendations or reading channels to enhance overseas visibility. Micro-documentary promotion should maximize reach among VideoChinaTV's existing audience

while strengthening social media traffic diversion mechanisms. Furthermore, we must leverage advantageous nodes for Chinese cultural exports—such as Confucius Institutes, cultural institutions, international book fairs, and academic conferences—to broaden dissemination pathways. Regarding reader feedback, shared cultural spaces within Amazon and YouTube book review communities will stimulate overseas audiences’ engagement, discussions, and derivative works, extending the narrative lifespan of Chinese stories.

In summary, through cross-media circulation, multimodal delayed diffusion, and feedback-optimized coordination, the multimodal narrative of *China Bouquet* constructs a distributed dissemination system. Cross-media platform synergies create pathways guiding audiences from offline engagement to online exploration. National, regional, and social media platforms catalyze the semantic proliferation of Chinese narratives, while practical constraints in overseas dissemination conversely drive the refinement of international communication strategies. The cross-cultural transmission of Chinese narratives must also undergo a transformation from one-way dissemination to two-way interaction, thereby genuinely advancing international communication and mutual cultural exchange.

V. The Multimodal Narrative Mechanism in China Bouquet

As a vital component of national cultural communication, the multimodal narrative practice of *China Bouquet* embodies systematic regulatory strategies for the international dissemination of Chinese stories. This section analyzes the intrinsic mechanisms of multimodal storytelling in Chinese narratives through three dimensions—narrative-driven construction, multi-institutional collaboration, and media technology deployment—using the international dissemination of *China Bouquet* as a starting point.

(I) Narrative Drive: From Chinese Stories to Building a Cultural Story Prototype Library

When promoting Chinese culture abroad, *China Bouquet* draws its fundamental impetus from the national macro-narrative of “Telling Chinese stories well.” It distills a set of “translatable story prototypes” centered on themes like civilization, ecology, and craftsmanship. These prototypes possess strong cross-cultural acceptability, focus on non-political cultural symbols, and fully leverage multimodal expression forms. Regarding the scope of story archetypes, cultural symbols like tea culture and martial arts are deeply rooted in Chinese traditions while also appearing in cultural practices across other nations, providing a natural foundation for cross-cultural resonance. During content selection, *China Bouquet* deliberately avoids political symbols to enhance its appeal in translation contexts, enabling the internationalization of its narrative strategy. The book centers on individual perspectives, daily life, and local cultures, employing a soft narrative tone to minimize the influence of national macro-narratives and

ideology. Furthermore, its multimodal presentation fully demonstrates the driving force of narrative, enabling Chinese stories to be “transferred, transformed, utilized, and reimagined” (Zhong, 2019:126) across diverse modal resources. Within this framework, the textual modality unearths historical contexts and underlying ideologies through storytelling, archival references, and journalistic reporting. The visual modality—integrating photography, murals, models, and ruins—encodes complex cultural elements, amplifying the intuitive expressiveness of cultural imagery. The case of *China Bouquet* demonstrates how multimodal narratives enrich the layered complexity and perceptibility of Chinese stories, expanding the reach and impact of their international dissemination networks.

(II) Institutional Collaboration: Co-Construction of Narratives by Diverse Actors

The multimodal narrative process of *China Bouquet* reveals that the international dissemination of Chinese stories inherently involves systematic practices across discourse generation, production encoding, and distribution dissemination. This encompasses collaboration among multiple institutions and teams, including planning, chief editorship, English translation, layout design, printing supervision, and publishing distribution. Specifically, the micro-documentary received support from the Cultural Communication Center of the China Foreign Languages Publishing Administration, which established its overarching narrative direction and discourse standards. Its production involved collaboration among chief planners, consultants, producers, supervisors, screenwriters, directors, cinematographers, editors, translators, proofreaders, and narrators. The print book was edited by Xu Baicheng, the micro-documentary's chief director, who led the planning, editing, translation, design, and printing of the print narrative. All illustrations were sourced from the micro-documentary, ensuring consistency across media platforms. Published by Sinolingua, the book's richly illustrated format emphasizes conveying the cultural connotations and values underlying Chinese stories. This collaborative model of “state institutions + professional teams” ensures the narrative aligns with national strategic objectives while also catering to the aesthetic preferences and expectations of international audiences.

Beyond the narrative's delivery mediums—micro-documentaries and books—its dissemination channels also reflect multi-stakeholder collaboration, indirectly influencing the survival and dissemination prospects of Chinese stories in the English-speaking world. The print edition of *China Bouquet* is distributed through multiple channels including Amazon, JD.com, and Dangdang.com. Bilingual micro-documentaries leverage online platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Art China Website, and Tencent Video for international dissemination, fostering synergistic dissemination pathways that integrate online and offline, textual and visual formats. The diverse institutional actors and platform media involved in Chinese

narratives provide robust support throughout their entire lifecycle—from conceptual blueprinting and material production to international circulation—collectively weaving a global distribution network for these stories.

(III) Media Technology: Technical Encoding, Modal Coordination, and Platform Adaptation

As scholars note, “multimodal narrative is not a simple superposition of modalities but emphasizes their synergistic relationships” to enhance audience emotional immersion (Fu, 2025:196). The multimodal narrative practices in *China Bouquet* demonstrate that the international dissemination of Chinese stories relies not only on content creation but also on the collaborative influence of technical encoding, modal coordination, and media platforms.

At the technical encoding level, visual imagery, background music, and subtitle language collectively participate in narrative construction, transforming Chinese stories into transmissible multimodal forms. At the modal orchestration level, static books carry high-density Chinese narratives, while dynamic micro-documentaries serve as cultural triggers. Embedded QR codes within the book serve as link points, enabling modal transitions and active audience participation, thereby expanding multimodal interaction dimensions. For platform adaptation, *China Bouquet* employs a color-printed format featuring Chinese-English bilingual text, rich illustrations, and cultural annotations. It partners with multiple book retailers to facilitate academic dissemination and library circulation. The micro-documentaries, each five minutes long, feature a fast-paced, multi-scene style with high emotional resonance. They are distributed across multiple overseas media platforms, using distinctive Chinese cultural symbols to attract target audiences. This combination of diverse media formats and distribution channels creates a comprehensive communication pathway for Chinese stories to reach international audiences.

Overall, the multimodal narrative case study of *China Bouquet* reveals an international communication system for Chinese stories jointly constructed through narrative drive, institutional collaboration, and media technology dimensions. At the narrative drive level, the editorial team established a systematic repository of cultural story archetypes, providing the content foundation for cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese narratives. Institutional collaboration ensures the authority and consistency of narrative discourse through official guidance, professional production, and market circulation. Media technology, meanwhile, expands presentation methods and boosts dissemination efficiency through technical encoding, modal coordination, and platform adaptation. Collectively, these three dimensions synergize to make China’s international storytelling more precise, efficient, and compelling.

Conclusion

As a key vehicle for disseminating Chinese narratives globally, *China Bouquet* employs multimodal storytelling to systematically and intuitively present China's cultural symbols, lifestyles, and value systems to the English-speaking world. Throughout the stages of discourse generation, coding implementation, and distribution dissemination, diverse institutions and creative entities collaborate closely in narrative production while fully integrating technical coding, modal coordination, and platform adaptation. Although multimodal narrative strategies effectively reduce cultural barriers, the international dissemination efficacy of Chinese stories remains constrained by platform logic and audience positioning. For future international dissemination pathways of Chinese narratives, audience analysis and precise targeting require further enhancement, while cross-platform collaborative dissemination and impact evaluation mechanisms should be refined. Meanwhile, we must explore transforming data from low-response or silent audiences into more valuable feedback, thereby expanding new possibilities for the global dissemination of Chinese stories.

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